

"Healthy Dozen" List for Toddlers

As part of "The Year of the Healthy Child," U.S. Surgeon General Richard H. Carmona, M.D., M.P.H., outlined a dozen tips to help keep toddlers safe and healthy. Excerpts from these are below. For the full text, go to www.surgeongeneral.gov/pressreleases/sg05192005.html.

1. **Teach healthy eating.** Provide three nutritious meals supplemented with two to three healthy snacks daily. Feed toddlers at the same time as other family members and allow them to grow into feeding themselves. Offer children nutritious foods and let them decide how much to eat. Avoid foods and drinks that are high in sugar.
2. **Begin a habit of good oral health.** Brush your child's teeth twice a day with a soft toothbrush. Begin brushing for your child when his or her teeth first appear and continue until age 3 or 4 when you can start teaching your child how to brush.
3. **Don't smoke.** And don't allow anyone else to smoke around your child. Second-hand smoke can have a harmful effect on your child's breathing and can have long-term respiratory consequences like impaired lung growth, chronic coughing, and wheezing. Diseases of the respiratory system (aggravated by second-hand smoke) are the leading causes of child hospitalization and one of the leading causes of toddler doctor visits.
4. **Give positive feedback.** Praise good behavior and accomplishments. This begins to ensure a healthy bond between parent and child. Also, make sure that your child's caregiver agrees with your point of view.
5. **Always use a car safety seat.** Be sure your child rides in an age- and weight-appropriate child safety seat, correctly installed in the back seat, on every trip.
6. **Safety-proof your house.** To prevent accidental poisoning, move all medications and cleaning products to high shelves. To prevent burns, set the temperature of your hot water heater to 120 degrees Fahrenheit. To prevent choking, be sure that any toys your child plays with do not have parts that are small enough to choke on. Do not give toddlers under age 2 foods that may cause choking, like hard candy, large pieces of raw vegetable or fruit, or tough meat. To prevent drowning, install a toilet lid lock on every toilet in the home.
7. **Never leave your toddler unattended.** As a child grows, so does his or her natural curiosity to explore. It takes a few seconds for a toddler to get into a dangerous situation.
8. **Make sure your child has a primary health provider.** Make sure that your child has a primary health provider, such as a pediatrician or family practitioner, who knows your child before your child has an illness, injury, or developmental delay that requires medical care.
9. **Fully immunize your child.** Make sure your child gets all immunizations on time.
10. **Learn child first aid and CPR.** Be prepared. Know how to call for help, including poison control. The national toll-free line for poison control is 1-800-222-1222.
11. **Practice prevention and safety.** Teach your child safety tips, including always swimming with a buddy and wearing a bicycle helmet. Be sure your older toddler knows his or her name, parents' names, and phone number. Get your child's fingerprints taken and keep a recent photograph.
12. **Have fun.** Hug, talk, read, explore, and play together. All parents sometimes feel overwhelmed as they tackle the challenges of parenting. If you feel so stressed that you feel unable to cope with the demands of parenting, get help.

For more information on "The Year of the Healthy Child" visit www.surgeongeneral.gov.

